

Citation-based academic link building

A PhilScience project

As part of any SEO strategy, link building is often seen as a form of chasing backlinks in a freestyle mode from more or less authoritative sites. However, a backlinks profile based only on the number of backlinks (measured usually by the DR or DA metrics of the popular tools Ahrefs and Moz) does not automatically result in increasing the organic traffic of a site, which is the natural and relevant measure for any site's authority, ranking, and position in searches. You may find DR 70-80 sites with zero organic traffic, just because such scores reflect artificial non-organic link building; of course, such situations render that metric somehow irrelevant. Academic and scholarly sites are in a category strongly positioned in the top of web authority, right below that of governmental sites. It is then wise as a SEO strategy to get connected with these sites in a fruitful manner; however, depending on every site's niche and resources, this could be a very difficult, if not impossible task to fulfill by either one's own or a third-party effort.

The citation-based academic link building (CBALB) is an innovative link-building program developed at *PhilScience*, under a science-communication project. With this program, sites in any niche can get connected with the academic/scholarly publications realm and obtain SEO benefits referring to both organic traffic to quality content and authoritative backlinks.

What citation-based academic link building is not

Before explaining what is CBALB and how it works, let's see what is not: CBALB has nothing to do with the simplistic link-building service advertised on the SEO marketplaces as "edu links". The providers of such services place links for their clients in sections of university sites, where contributions are allowed for registered users or security breaches facilitate the posting of content. The most exploited sections are student forums, blogs, student profiles, and wiki platforms; the most common form of such insertions is the blog comment. Obviously, such placements –made through either authorized or unauthorized access – are very volatile, given that such links are easily identifiable as spam and sooner or later will be removed by the moderators. From a SEO perspective, only a minute number of such links are placed in a context with a minimal connection with the general topic of the site, which should be education/science/academic life, and should direct to a page related to that topic; the wide majority of such links can be qualified as 'spammy links'. Therefore, no gain in organic traffic can be predicted for such "edu links".

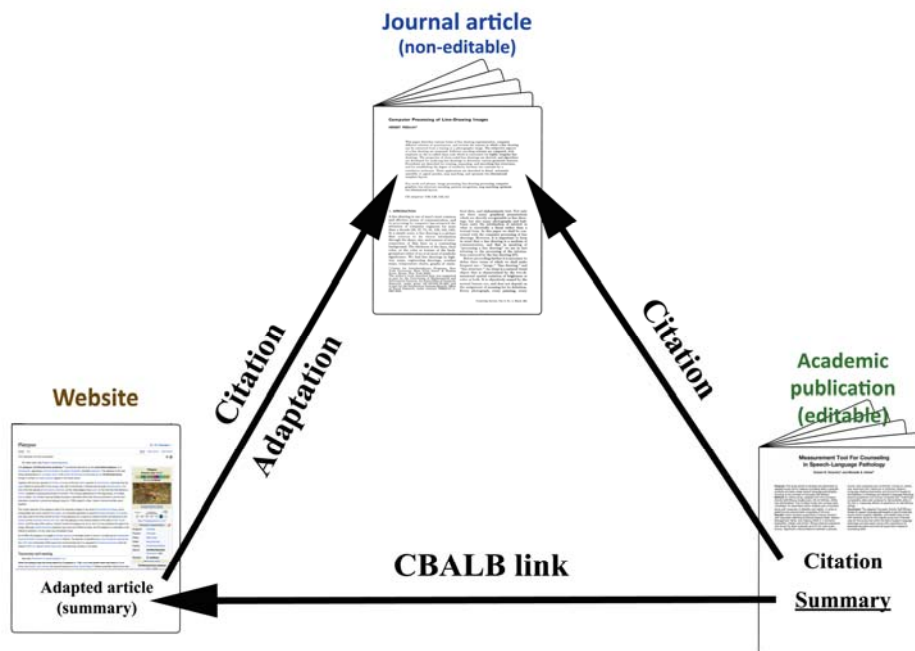
The principles of CBALB

Journal articles can provide plenty of interesting, useful topics for the expert content of a non-academic website, if adapted for the popular audience.

Academic literature is so wide that almost any subject related to facts or theories about the world and beyond gets directly or indirectly connected to a topic of a journal article.

This is why websites in *any niche* can adopt such expert content. Once such a topic chosen, the website can get connected with an academic publication that cites the journal article with that topic, as you will see further.

This content connection works in a double sense – the academic publication citing the journal article can link back to the site where that topic is discussed, commented on, or summarized, for the benefit of the readership of the former. As such, the generated backlink will be both contextual and useful. The academic publication can be edited with the new link and published back as revised by either its authors or other academics, on academic/scholarly platforms where they have access as researchers. These are the principles of CBALB, which functions with the involvement of the client site's management and academics dealing with writing, editing, and publishing on academic platforms.



Finding the suitable topic and journal article

The more tightly a topic is related to the niche of the website and to the topic of the academic publication citing the original article, the more valuable is the acquired link to its adapted version. One of the virtues of CBALB is topic flexibility: The two-step citing makes possible an indirect yet contextual connection between apparently different topics, without affecting the SEO value of the link (its “passing juice”, in SEO jargon).

Example:

Assume one has a site selling smoking products and wants to place a link to it in an academic publication. There are academic topics related to smoking, for example in the fields of smoking/tobacco addiction or industrial chemistry. Once an available publication with a smoking

topic within these fields is chosen for the link, the site's manager or owner has to check its references list and choose a journal article with a similar topic, then write a summary of it and manage to backlink it from that citation. If such a publication is not available for this action, there may be another with a topic not directly related to smoking, but citing a smoking paper in a certain context. For instance, a publication on gambling addiction may discuss at some point how gambling addiction is different from smoking addiction and cite a journal article with the former topic, which can be chosen for summarizing.

Here are a few other schematic examples of indirect connection between different topics belonging to different domains:

- *strange places on Earth* (the topic of the site) and *iron* (the general topic of the editable publication):
strange places on Earth → *craters caused by iron meteorites* (the general topic of the cited journal article) ← *iron chemistry* (the research field of the editable publication)
- *smartphones' characteristics* (the topic of the site) and *Sun* (the general topic of the editable publication):
smartphones' characteristics → *the electromagnetic radiation compared to the solar radiation* (the general topic of the cited journal article) ← *radiation of the Sun* (the research field of the editable publication)
- *handcrafted gifts* (the topic of the site) and *analytical people* (the general topic of the editable publication):
handcrafted gifts → *creativity and emotion in brain's physiology* (the general topic of the cited journal article) ← *brain's physiology of analytical versus creative people* (the research field of the editable publication).

Google Scholar stands as the main resource for the action of choosing the topic and citation, but consulting in this matter with the academics with whom you collaborate in a CBALB project is of course more fruitful, especially if availability of the publications to be edited is concerned.

Writing the summary

Once the topic and journal article are chosen, you may proceed toward preparing an article of 1,500- 2,000 words as a friendly summarizing version of the journal article. That article will be an adaptation from the academic one to the general-public audience, in what concerns style, language, and terminology, and will summarize the findings of the latter, in a broader non-academic context, adapted for your website and your readership. The adapted article will mention the authors of the journal article, present the findings of that research, and cite the original publication. You may change the original title and also add new comments and ideas, or extend the contexts in your article to touch other topics of your site, while maintaining the focus on the original topic.

Even as an adapted version, your article becomes citable in an academic publication.

It is highly recommended that an academic familiar with the field of the chosen journal article writes the piece and you provide their name in the author line, for ensuring consistency and credibility. The authorship recommendation, along with that of including a references list according to the academic standard, also has a SEO reason: Even as non-academic, there are good chances that your article will be picked by Google Scholar to be included in their returns (provided the article meets their requirements); if this happens, you will also acquire a permanent backlink from Google Scholar as a bonus.

Backlinking the summary from the publication

Once the content is ready and live on your site, an academic with access to and editing rights will edit the publication chosen for linking on the academic/scholarly platform where published, so that the revised version will include your link. The link will be placed in the entry of the original article in the references list of the publication, and labeled as ‘Summary’ or ‘Related article’, or in a section below the references list titled ‘Related articles’, as in the following examples:

Harrigan, K., Dixon, M., & Brown, D. (2015). Modern multi-line slot machine games: The effect of lines wagered on winners, losers, bonuses, and losses disguised as wins. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, Vol. 31, 423-439. [Summary](#) (anchor for [yoursite.com](#)) [link to the adapted article]

Papatheodorou, A. (2001). Why people travel to different places. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 28(1), 164-179. Summary retrieved from [yoursite.com](#) [link to the adapted article]

Katz, D. L., & Meller, S. (2014). Can we say what diet is best for health? *Annual Review of Public Health*, 35(1), 83-103. [Related article](#) (anchor for [yoursite.com](#)) [link to the adapted article]

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Related articles:

[Name of the author], ([year]). [Title of the adapted article]. [[yoursite.com](#)]. Retrieved from [yoursite.com](#) [link to the adapted article]

After posting back the revised publication on the academic site, the revised version will go live with the new insertion and link after it passes the moderation/review process (for the moderated platforms).

Academic sites and publishers

The publications available and suitable for CBALB are those showing in the following categories of academic/scholarly sites: independent and institutional science repositories, scholarly archives, research social-media platforms, university scholarship/didactical/library resources (such as those powered by Scalar, Canvas, or Moodle), and academic publishers’ science blogs.

Domains in such categories are of high authority (DR 75 – 95) and include for instance:

[Springernature.com](#) (The science blog of the scientific communities at Springer Nature, DR 82)

[Philarchive.org](#) (The #1 philosophy and related disciplines scholarly archive, DR 80) [Usc.edu](#)

(The Scalar library resource of University of Southern California, DR 85) [Researchgate.net](#) (The #1 multidisciplinary repository, DR 93)

[Hal.science](#) (The open archive of the Centre pour la Communication Scientifique Directe, DR 75)

[Osf.io](#) (Open Science Framework, DR 84)

[Ssrn.com](#) (Social Science Research Network of Elsevier, DR 92).

All pages of such sites are indexed by Google and by the scholarly search engines and their links are then counted by Google’s ranking algorithms.

Academics with access to these sites can post and edit the publications they authored, but also the academic works of other authors, provided that such works have a free distribution license and are not already published on that site.

The science repositories and archives stand as academic resources for other sites, which may feed with open-access papers. Therefore a CBALB link might also show in other places besides the

academic site where posted. Moreover, the repositories assign a DOI (digital object identifier) and a doi.org link to every publication, which redirects to that publication. When a researcher cites a publication with its DOI, that publication gets backlinked automatically from the new one with the citation. This means that a CBALB link gets additional SEO value with every new citation of the publication carrying it.

The virtues of citation-based academic link building

Link building as SEO strategy is not an exact science and in general is characterized by ups and downs, tries with uncertain results, and even risks. The CBALB jumps out of this blurry pattern to a high degree of certainty and effectiveness, and the main reason is that all parties involved benefit from its results: It enriches both the site posting new expert content and the academic publication citing it. Publishing a summary of a journal article in a friendly form is beneficial for both researchers and students as well as the popular audience; it is an effective form of science communication. Journal papers are not an easy read even for the researchers citing them, and for most papers, their abstracts are not sufficient for extracting the main ideas and results to cite. As for the site publishing a summary, that aligns with the recent Google updates in terms of search positioning and authority, where the criteria of expert authorship, substance, and credibility of the content, and academic citations, have been granted the highest importance. From a mere SEO strategy perspective, the CBALB is preferable to other forms of freestyle random link building, with respect to the balance consumed resources - sites' authority - results. Pointing to its main virtues, these would be the following:

- It assumes new valuable content for the site using CBALB (potentially backlinked from Google Scholar).
- It works for any niche (except illegal).
- The links are always contextual and not spammy – CBALB is white hat throughout the whole process.
- The links are secure and not volatile.
- The links have the potential to self-replicate on other sites by external feed.
- The page with the link is automatically backlinked from other high-authority academic portals listing that publication (orcid.org, semanticscholar.org, Google Scholar, etc.), as well as through DOI citation.
- The whole work from analysis of choices and writing to publishing is done by a qualified third party.

The team of academics at [PhilScience](https://philscience.org/) provides citation-based academic link building services for the sites interested. Contact them at [info\[at\]philscience.org](mailto:info[at]philscience.org) for any details and concrete examples of CBALB links.